

OPERATION: SAFE COMMUNITY

A MEMPHIS FAST FORWARD INITIATIVE



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MEMPHIS LEADERS SHARE BEST PRACTICES IN YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

Memphis leaders joined those from nine other cities to share best practices around youth violence prevention and children's exposure to violence.

Washington, D.C. –United States Attorney Edward L. Stanton, III along with Memphis leaders representing Shelby County Government, Memphis City Schools, Workforce Investment Network, University of Memphis, Agape Child and Family Services and Memphis Shelby Crime Commission joined leaders from nine other cities for a two-day working session hosted by the Justice Department to discuss better coordinating of federal, state, and local resources and efforts to address community violence.

The session, convened by the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, brought together local teams of mayors, police chiefs, educators, health officials, service providers, and other leaders, along with their U.S. Attorneys, to discuss comprehensive responses to youth and gang violence. The Forum welcomed leaders from newly-named Forum sites in Minneapolis, New Orleans, Philadelphia and Camden, N.J., who joined the founding member sites of Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, Tenn., Salinas and San Jose, Calif.

"Youth violence is a complex and difficult problem and it will require all of us working together to address these challenges," said **Mary Lou Leary, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs**. "Bringing networks of law enforcement agencies, educators, health and treatment providers, community and faith-based organizations, parents and kids to stand together in the fight against youth and gang violence is critical to reclaim our communities."

Launched in 2010 at the direction of President Obama, the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention (the Forum) is a network of federal agencies, localities and private partners that share information and support local efforts to prevent and reduce youth violence.

"The Department of Justice's National Forum on Youth Violence provides a unique opportunity for Memphis and Shelby County to meaningfully address and disrupt some of the most urgent challenges our children face. This includes what has become known as the 'school-to-prison pipeline,' which too often transforms our schools from doorways of opportunity into gateways to the correctional system," stated **United States Attorney, Edward L. Stanton III**.

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The two-day working session included a range of topics from the challenges and opportunities to implementing and sustaining effective re-entry programs for youth to identifying evidence based practices for safe and supportive school discipline. The Forum attendees joined with representatives from various cities participating in the Department of Justice's Defending Childhood Initiative that addresses children's exposure to violence. Participants from both initiatives heard from preventative medical expert, Dr. Vincent Felitti about trauma informed care and how Adverse Childhood Experiences impact the development, mental and physical health of individuals well into adulthood.

Memphis Shelby Crime Commission, Executive Director, Michelle Fowlkes said, "When we launched the youth violence plan in 2011, we had no idea that the network would be expanded to reach others across the country. Having the opportunities for peer city visits and sharing best practices on a national level is invaluable."

The Memphis delegation was well represented with partners representing both the Forum on Youth Violence Prevention and Shelby County's Defending Childhood Initiative, known locally as NOVA (Network for Overcoming Violence and Abuse). The team was invited to showcase how both initiatives work collaboratively across Memphis and Shelby County by leveraging resources, engaging youth and community members and partnering with law enforcement to implement strategies towards sustainable change in preventing youth violence and reducing their exposure to violence.

"The focus of the Defending Childhood Initiative both federally and locally is to make our communities more informed of how trauma impacts children so that we can work together to curtail children's exposure to violence and other trauma and provide evidence based interventions to decrease youth and gang violence," explained **Keisha Walker, Shelby County Office of Early Childhood and Youth & Defending Childhood Initiative, Administrator**.

Executive Director of Agape Child & Family Services, David Jordan had this to say about his experience attending the working session, "Being with the 9 other cities in Washington, DC for the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention & DCI meeting was energizing, and also confirming that Memphis clearly is moving in the right direction for good to occur in our city and communities, especially for youth who are exposed to violence, and youth who participate in violence."

More details about the Forum and summaries of the city plans are available at www.findyouthinfo.gov. To learn more about the Defending Childhood Initiative/NOVA visit www.shelbycountynova.net.

Founded in 1997, the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission is an independent, non-profit organization that spearheads Operation: Safe Community 2012-2016. This plan has 26 strategies, 45 accountable partners, and more than 100 public and private agencies engaged in the implementation of the plan. The Memphis Youth Violence Plan is incorporated under *Goal #5 – Reducing Youth Violence* of Operation: Safe Community 2012-2016. For more information visit www.operationsafecommunity.org.

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